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SCHOPENHAUER, THE MAN AND THE PHILOSOPHER.

BY G. KOERNER.

SEVERAL articles on Schopenhauer have been published in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, the last of which is of special interest and appeared in September, 1893. Considering the chauvinism which since Sedan has shown itself not only in the masses of the French people, but also in leading, otherwise respectable, journals, in books and speeches, the *Revue des deux Mondes* has manifested upon treating German affairs and particularly German literature an impartiality worthy of its high standing. For several years past it has devoted many pages to German philosophy, and Schopenhauer has been reviewed by some of its best contributors, such as Brunetière and Bourdeau.

The present paper in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, to a translation of which I desire to invite the attention of the readers of *The Open Court*, is, as the title confesses, not quite an original one, but is based in great part on the eighth volume of the "History of Modern Philosophy," by Kuno Fischer of Heidelberg, which volume goes by the title of "Arthur Schopenhauer."

Schopenhauer, the *Revue* states, was born on the 22d of February, 1788, and after a short life of roving and travelling, he took up, in 1831, his permanent abode in the city of Frankfort where he ended his days. He was yet unknown, though he had in the month of December, 1818, published his system in a book which has made an epoch in the history of philosophy. That book, from which at a later day so many thinkers, writers, and artists have drawn instruction and inspiration, did not meet with the slightest success. Of the eight hundred copies printed, ten years afterwards one hundred and fifty remained on hand, and one hundred were cut up for waste-paper: the edition was never exhausted.

As no man felt more vividly what he was worth and was less master of his imaginings, Schopenhauer charged his misfortune to a vast learned conspiracy of the University professors of philosophy, who had come to an understanding to kill him off by their silence, and who forbade Germany to pronounce his name. He would have done better if he had said to himself that he had come too soon, that he had anticipated time. During the first half of this century optimistic ration-

alism was in vogue in Germany. The universal reign of reason was proclaimed and it was found everywhere, in "things" as well as in living and reasoning beings, in human existence, even in politics, in nature itself, on earth as well as in heaven. It was said with Hegel "that everything that exists was rational, that history was a progressive evolution, the progress of conscious liberty."

A philosopher who proclaimed that the world was created by the fatal mistake of a blind and unconscious Will, which is the origin of the All, would at that time have been considered as a sorry jester or a melancholic fool. In a passage in one of her books, Madam de Staël had declared, just as Schopenhauer has, "that the will which is the life, the life which is also the will, contains the whole secret of the universe and of ourselves," but she had not said that the will is the misfortune and the original sin; she had not reproved the creative Demon, she had not, as Schopenhauer, when pointing out to the creator his works, shouted "How didst thou dare to disturb the sacred quietude of the nonentity (*néant*), to generate a world which is nothing but a vale of miseries, of tears, and of crimes?"

I may be allowed to suggest very timidly (for I do not pretend to be at all versed in philosophical lore) that M. Volbert,* the author of the essay, has done Hegel an injustice respecting the dictum, that all that is, is reasonable. It appears to me that Hegel did not mean to say that the present state of things could not be any better, but simply that it is the inevitable result of all events since historical times and must therefore be accepted as a necessity; the very next sentence quoted by M. Volbert from Hegel: "that history is a progressive evolution," seems to sustain this view. It must be admitted, however, that Hegel, inasmuch as he advanced his system early in the century when an absolute or paternal despotism prevailed throughout the greater part of Europe, was generally considered by all liberal-minded people not only as an advocate of conservatism, but of despotism. Yet his doctrine was in truth a double-edged sword. To-day a king might rule absolutely and on the morrow a popular rising might dethrone him and send both him and his adher-

* G. Volbert is, I believe, the *nom de plume* of Victor Cherbuliez, a Geneva Swiss.

ents to the guillotine. That revolution would then exist and be as rational as the overthrown despotism. It was not very long before the reactionary parties denounced Hegel's philosophy as revolutionary, while it was strongly advocated by the radicals.

"Times changed," M. Volbert continues, "and doubts arose whether reason was the sole arbiter of human destinies. The nations had by patient efforts and in the sweat of their brows obtained a part of their liberties; they had conquered claims, which, the moment they had won them, they underrated, afterwards to wonder why they had wished for them, and to discover that hope gives us more pleasure than fulfilment. Sciences had made marvellous progress; they told the people that history resembled fairy-tales and promised to transform the world. But in spite of their admirable inventions, it was found that the sum of good and bad remained nearly the same, that neither railroads nor telegraphs, nor chemistry nor physical knowledge could cure heart-woes. Industry worked wonders, political economy was asked to do the same, but it declared itself powerless. The old traditions, the old customs had been lost, and people became disgusted with the new ideas as well as the old ones; they did not know how to replace them, but waited for something that did not come. It seemed that anything was possible, and it was as hard to be happy as before the invention of the steam-engine. There was much dreaming, and in consequence the nerves had become more irritable, the imagination more excited and disturbed. Satisfied desires created new ones, at no time was the world more given up to pleasure and more sensible to privations. The sages who were content with little did not dare to agree that they were content, and with a mixture of vanity took glory in expressing an inexorable *ennui*. A pessimistic philosophy was henceforth sure of winning the public favor. Schopenhauer dethroned Hegel, became the philosopher *à la mode*, and when he affirmed that everything was fiction, lie, idle show, the proposition was easily admitted, and his dictum :

'Betrug ist Alles, Lug und Schein,'

was repeated by his followers.

"He had well calculated that his day would come, and his sudden reputation gave him more joy than astonishment. In a short time this man, so long ignored, at sixty years of age, had become a celebrated writer, admired and worshipped. People came from afar to see him, to solicit audiences, were proud to dine near him at the table of the Hôtel d'Angleterre. The ladies, the military officers stationed at Frankfort studied his works and became infatuated with this prophet, so long unknown. His birthday was celebrated. From everywhere flowers, presents, addresses in verse and prose were sent him. Some compared him to King Arthur of the Round Table, others proclaimed him

'the emperor of German philosophy.'" So, Monsieur Volbert.

The writer of this paper, a native of Frankfort, lived for more than a year not far from Schopenhauer's residence, after the latter had moved there in 1831, but was not made aware of the vast ovations to the philosopher which the essayist of the *Revue des deux Mondes* so vividly describes. He probably refers to a later period, but it is hardly probable that the ladies became infatuated with his doctrines and smothered him with flowers and sent him presents and addresses, since he has in all his works treated the fair sex almost brutally, hardly allowing them to have souls. But M. Volbert, as far as style is concerned, is a typical Frenchman, and like all Frenchmen delights in exaggeration and high coloring. "The first time," continues the Review, "that one of his devotees thought it proper to kiss his hand he uttered an exclamation of surprise, but soon accustomed himself to this kind of ceremony, and when he heard that some rich man, who had succeeded in getting the philosopher's portrait, proposed to erect a chapel as a shrine for the sacred picture he merely observed: 'This is the first which is consecrated to me; how many will there be in the year 2000?'"

After his death his glory continued to increase, and spread over the world; his works were translated into all languages. But the Germans are a highly critical people, and their infatuations are often followed by rude reversions. One is betrayed mostly by one's friends. Mr. Gwinner, the testamentary executor of the illustrious dead, thought it proper to write a minute and indiscreet biography of his master which looks much like an indictment. What injured, however, Schopenhauer still more, was the publication of his correspondence, wherein he paints himself as he was. The man appeared unpleasant, and it was asked whether his philosophy was to be taken in earnest. It was more closely examined and found incoherent and full of contradictions. It is easy to discover such inconsistencies in so very complex a system, where the idealism of Kant is amalgamated with the theories of Cabanis and Helvetius, the metamorphosis of Lamarck with the Platonic doctrine of eternal ideas and permanent types, the most abstract and subtle æsthetics with a psychology, which teaches that our thoughts are the secretions of our brain, and what more should I say, the irony of Voltaire with the ecstasies, the remorse, and unspeakable tenderness of a Hindu Messiah! *Das Gebäude*, it was said, *ruht nicht Stein auf Stein*. That is going too far. "You cannot get rid of a man," as M. Brunetière has well written, "who has uttered words which will never be forgotten." Kuno Fischer also recognises that his system is very inconsistent, but he renders justice to the originality of the great thinker, to his ingenious and profound views, and his

remarkable power of analysis. Jean Paul, who read him when nobody else did, compared his first book to those sombre lakes of Norway, enclosed on all sides by dark walls of rocks and on which the sun never shines, over the surface of which no bird ever flies, no waves tremble, but whose depths in clear nights reflect the starry heavens. He added: "I cannot but admire the book. Fortunately I do not accept the conclusions." That is nearly the judgment of Professor Fischer.

But the contradictions which have been pointed out in his philosophy do him less injustice than his carelessness in regulating his life according to his doctrines. Most of the philosophers have had their weaknesses, inconsistencies. No one would require them to be heroes, grand characters, the incarnations of an idea, such as the Pascals, the Spinozas, the Fichtes. But Schopenhauer seems to have taken the mischievous pleasure of contradicting in many things his own maxims and principles. Read his writings, his letters, and you will find that you have to do with two persons resembling one another in nothing. Leopardi, in describing the miseries of this world, had felt them. It is from a lacerated heart martyred by destiny, which starts that immortal plaint, never heard without deep emotion.

The pessimism of Schopenhauer, according to the *spirituelle* expression of Mr. Kuno Fischer, is "a pessimism without pain; he was born *coiffé*." And although he saw the light of day on a Friday, of which he complained, he was in fact a Sunday-child (*ein Sonntagskind*), a favorite of the gods to whom had been vouchsafed the best things of the earth, all the gifts of intellect, a complete independence, all the leisure for cultivating his faculties, a determined vocation, which he had not to seek, works that were to give him a name, and up to his last years an indestructible health, the sleep of a child, an old age warmed and illuminated by the sun of glory, and ending by a sudden and gentle death. And indeed he did not ignore the advantages with which he had been favored. How often has he boasted of his genius, of his robust health, of his independence, of his works, and even of his shapely form. And this fortunate man blamed the Supreme Being for not having made him still more happy by conferring on him some big benefice and his sweetheart, Miss Fiedler. "But after all," he said, "such as I am with six hundred and thirty shillings income, I am still obliged to Him." He had a great deal more than an income of six hundred and thirty shillings, he could easily do without a big benefice, and if he did not marry Miss Fiedler it was owing to his horror of marriage.

Could it be said that he waited for glory too long, that by the injustice of his contemporaries and by his ill success with his works, his imagination had become darkened? When he was thirty-three years old,

before he had written a single line and had no title to distinction, he had said to Wieland: "Life is a sorry thing (*eine missliche Sache*), and I will employ mine to meditate upon life." But, on the other hand, it cannot be believed that his pessimism was a mere sham, a hypocrisy, or a fixed literary prejudice. He had seen that valley of tears which he painted, but it was only in idea; and it had appeared to him with such luminous clearness that he could not help finding it beautiful, and feeling that his lamentations were mixed with a secret voluptuousness. "The grand tragedy," Fischer tells us, "was played in the theatre, and he was in a very soft orchestra seat, his spectacles in hand serving him as a microscope, and while a number of spectators, forgetting the play, went to the *buffet*, he followed with strained attention all its incidents. No one at that moment was more serious than he, no one had a more penetrating look, after which he went home, feeling at the same time a profound emotion of sadness and joy, and then he told what he had seen."

It is a custom of philosophers at dinner, (especially towards the end of it,) to amuse themselves by discoursing upon all the horrors afflicting human kind from Australia to the Arctic Pole. This indulgence in abominations is very amusing, it is a pleasure which sedentary burghers and parish priests, who only know their own church-steeple, have no idea of. But a still greater pleasure is it to have a warm and strong imagination and the gift to make others see what one has seen oneself or fancies to have seen. Schopenhauer was convinced "that the world was a place of penitence, a colony for convicts," and he took as much pleasure relating the miseries of mankind as any English novelist in describing the prisons or the poor-house. The one who better than any one else has represented the gloomy silence of the Norwegian lakes has naturally a taste for dismal and desolated landscapes. Study the letters of Schopenhauer and you will be convinced that if he had been less of a pessimist, he would have been less happy. Who could on that account make a criminal charge against him! This philosopher has the sincerity of an artist, and that is indeed something.

Amongst the inconsistencies his enemies charge him with, there is one which does not at all shock me. "If he had killed himself," they say, "we should have believed in his good faith." That is indeed asking too much, and I have never understood that pessimists, in order to prove their doctrine, should be required to shoot off their heads. There was once, if I mistake not, an English translator of Lucretius who wrote at the margin of every page of his manuscript, "*Nota bene*, after finishing this translation I am going to kill myself." He finished it and killed himself, proving thereby that he was a man of his word. But when Schopenhauer is blamed for not having acted that way,

one forgets that on that point he was in accord with his doctrine, and that he had explicitly condemned suicide. Had he not declared that the sage must try to suppress his will to exist, that the unfortunate who kills himself, far from killing his will, ceases to live because he does not cease to will, but only attempts to put an end to his sufferings? "The suffering," he said, "is the supreme mortification which leads to resignation and to release, and a man who commits suicide is like a sick man, not having the courage to submit to a painful but salutary operation, prefers to retain his malady."

Not only did he never have a thought of destroying himself, but he occupied himself all the time with preserving himself; few people have taken better care of their precious persons and have been more attentive to defend themselves against every accident. Fear of the small-pox drove him from Naples; he fled from Venice because the snuff used there was poisoned; he left Berlin to escape the cholera. For a long time he was in the habit of not going to sleep before having placed a loaded pistol under his pillow. He had his rooms on the ground floor in order to be quicker in the street if the house took fire. Only with his own razor was he to be shaved, and for fear of drinking out of an infected tumbler he always carried a leathern cup in his pocket. Mr. Bordeau was right in saying that Schopenhauer could have applied to himself the words of our old satirist, "I fear nothing but danger." But these are not characteristic traits; they belong to physiology and heredity. He was a born maniac and not without cause.

His grandmother on the father's side had been insane; so were two of his uncles, and his father was eccentric. From the first months of his mother's being in the family way, his father, Henry Floris Schopenhauer, had asserted that she would bear him a son, that this son would be a great merchant, that his name should be Arthur, and as he was an Anglomaniac, he concluded that Arthur should be born in the skin of an Englishman. To accomplish this he took his wife to London, but hardly had he established himself there when he changed his mind, and, in a bad season, the sea running high, he took her back again to Danzig, where Arthur was born two months afterwards. If her confinement passed off favorably, she did not owe it to her husband.

The same man killed himself in an attack of high fever, throwing himself from an attic into one of the canals of Hamburg. He would not have been able to compose a book, entitled "The World as Will and as Representation" (the English use instead of "representation" the word "idea," neither word expressing accurately the German "Vorstellung"). He left it for his son to write, and Arthur deserves credit for hav-

ing proved that one may be a maniac and a powerful reasoner at the same time.

The pessimists have always affected to hate women, and Schopenhauer always proclaimed himself a hardened misogynist. How many epigrams has he shot off "on the creatures with short ideas and long hair"! He would not even admit that woman was fair. The intelligence of man, he said, must have been darkened by love in order to admire the other sex. And yet the great woman-hater had always loved women. But we must pardon even philosophers the inconsistencies which women cause them to commit; they have been created to make us love contradictions. To the pleasure of admiring them we add that of abusing them. Is there a happiness equal to that?

To speak ill of women while loving them is not a mortal sin, but we are astonished that a philosopher who pronounced himself a great contemner of men (*Menschenverächter*), who at all times professed the utmost scorn for the vulgar, for the *bourgeois*, for the philistines, the *souverain canaille*, should be so anxious to know what they thought of him, and who attached a boundless estimate to the smoke called glory. No one was more concerned about his reputation, more greedy of laudations and flatteries. Whosoever criticised his works in an unfriendly spirit was either a nobody, or a scamp and a blockhead. Those who praised him were at once sure of his esteem. It will be seen from his correspondence that he was constantly asking his disciples and particularly his famulus Frauenstaedt to visit the reading-rooms, to run over carefully all the books, journals, reviews, and to copy the passages where there was any mention of Schopenhauer and his genius. He was not always satisfied with their quests. "My great vexation is," he said, "that I have not read half of what has been written about me." He was, however, not so very ungrateful; he confessed "that at the last he had tasted much enjoyment, that an old age, crowned with roses, even white roses, was a real blessing." The older he became the more his pessimism was softened. The tone of his letters changed; his hot fits of passion were succeeded by sarcastic cheerfulness. He had formerly affirmed with Simonides that the greatest good was "not to exist." He had discovered that there was some good in life, he wished for nothing more than the prolongation of his life, and two years before his death, he wrote to one of his friends: "The sacred Upanishad declares in two places that the normal duration of human life is one hundred years, and Mr. Flourens in his treaty on Longevity says nearly the same thing. This is a consolation." M. G. Volbert here adds a sentiment which I cannot but highly approve, "Of all the vanities of this world the most vain is a despair which dreams of a centenary existence,"

Schopenhauer was not only the most eloquent of pessimists but was also a moralist as profound as he was rigid. But he did not practise morality, and his adversaries had in this respect the advantage over him. He taught that compassion was the foundation of morality, but hastened to add, that real pity had nothing in common with the lukewarm philanthropy "which allows us to deplore the misfortunes of others while we feel easy in our own skin." The holy pity which he preaches is that which Buddha knew, that mysterious virtue which cannot be acquired unless the heart is penetrated with the idea of the Unity of all Beings. If we believe with Kant that time and space are only forms of our perceptions, the multiplicity and diversity of things are only a vain appearance and reveal themselves to us as identical with ourselves. The veil of the Maya is rent to pieces, the grand illusion vanishes. The egotist with blinded eyes makes a careful distinction between himself and all that is not himself, he sees in the universe a strange thing, which he uses for his own purposes, but in truth he believes only in his own existence. For the wise man there exists no "ego" nor "non-ego." He discovers in the innermost depths of his existence the principles of the world, and he recognises himself in all that is.

Schopenhauer, of all philosophers, is certainly the one who has most severely and most logically condemned egoism, but in practice he had never been anything else than a pronounced egotist. One day on a railway platform, when a train was approaching he saw a stranger about to cross the track, he cried out to him and lectured him severely on his imprudence; that was perhaps the most real mark of "holy pity" he has ever given to his fellow-men. He was a bachelor, a capitalist, and as much of an Anglomaniac as his father. He wanted to live like an Englishman residing on the Continent, who had left in England all the charges incumbent on him as a citizen, and given up his duties to his family. Having well regulated the hours of his employment he never sacrificed to any person the least of his habitudes. It would have taken a fire to prevent him from taking his siesta, of taking a walk, reading the *Times* at the regular hours, or of playing a little tune on the flute before he put on his coat, and tied his white "cravat" preparatory to going to dinner. He managed his fortune as well as his time, and in spite of some unlucky investments he had doubled his capital and his revenues. That was all very well, but what would Buddha have said to it?

There are amiable egotists, but such was not his case. To his adversaries he always showed himself implacable, particularly to the University professors of philosophy, and when in the reactionary period, which followed upon the dissolution of the Frankfort Parliament (1849), some of those professors were removed

from their positions by the Government, he felt the joy of a cannibal who eats his enemy. Whether it was Fichte or Schelling, Hegel or Herbart, he treated all his rivals as charlatans, prattlers, old women, idiots, humbugs; but as he was a prudent man he took legal advice to find out to what limit a philosopher might be abused without risking a prosecution for libel, and also from prudential motives he waited for the death of Fichte and Hegel before he loudly proclaimed what he thought of them.

If he treated his enemies *en canaille*, he also often maltreated his friends. As he only knew friendship, when useful, those only of his disciples were admitted to his familiarity who busied themselves with spreading his glory. Even Frauenstaedt, who had devotedly done everything to get him readers and admirers, and whom he occasionally called his Theophrastus, fell under his displeasure when in some journal, as Schopenhauer believed, he had not correctly interpreted him, or had spoken respectfully of philosophical professors. If he was hard to his disciples, to whom he was under great obligations, it is easy to believe that he was still more so to low people to whom he owed nothing. Having had at Berlin a violent quarrel with a washerwoman, he used her roughly, throwing her down; for this he was condemned to pay her sixty thalers every year. When informed that she had died, he indorsed on the letter giving him the news: "*Obit anus, obit onus.*"

What was most singular and distressing in his history was his quarrel with his mother, whom for the succeeding twenty years he never visited. Johanna Schopenhauer was more charming than beautiful. She loved the world and united taste with gracefulness. In 1806, shortly after her settling herself at Weimar, Goethe had married his mistress, Christine Vulpius, to the great scandal of the court and town. He presented her to Mrs. Schopenhauer, who welcomed her with great cordiality. "Since he has given her his name," she remarked, "we can well afford to give her a cup of tea." In this way she won at once the favor of the great man, and within a short time, as she informed her son, her salon had become a literary circle without its equal in Germany.

She had rendered a great service to this ungrateful son, whom his father had condemned to a mercantile career. She revoked the sentence, encouraged him to pursue the course for which he felt himself born. But there was little harmony in their characters. Of a subtle and gay temper, she disapproved not only of his gloomy ideas, but also of his pride, of his Olympian and oracular conceitedness. "Although," she wrote him, "it is necessary to my happiness to know that you are happy; I do not care to be a witness of your good fortune; it would be difficult for me to live

show with you." On his part, he accused her of loving shew too much, and of spending too much money. But whatever his grievances might have been, he would never have broken with her had she not written biographies, travels, and novels, which sold well, while the prose of Arthur did not sell at all. This wound never healed. "My books will be read," he wrote her at one time, "when the last copy of yours will have been thrown away for rubbish." A philosopher jealous of the literary success of his mother is a rare spectacle. After her death, Frauenstaedt found in the posthumous works of Feuerbach a harsh and very ill-favored portrait of Johanna Schopenhauer. He lost no time in sending it to the master, who replied: "The portrait is a very good likeness. God forgive me, but it made me laugh." And yet one of his doctrines was, that intelligence compared with goodness of heart was the flickering light of a torch compared to the luminous clearness of the sun. "God forgive me, that makes me laugh." Another fling; what would Buddha have said to this?

In justice to him be it remarked that he always painted himself as he was; his correspondence proves it. He very much admired Rancé, and, seeing his portrait, he felt an emotion and observed, "that is the effect of gracefulness." He knew well that this quality was wanting in him. To those who reproached him with the difference of his doctrine and his conduct of life he would answer: "Look at what I say and not at what I do. It is enough for the sculptor to make a beautiful statue; is he bound to be beautiful himself?"

Unfortunately, he undertook to secure for himself a place amongst the founders of religion, and this pretension spoiled all. The founders of religion engage to practise what they teach; they are judged by their work and their miracles; and if Francis of Assisi, while preaching poverty, had been occupied in doubling his revenues, he would long since have been forgotten. Bacon was not a good man; but what is that to us? He did not pride himself on being a saviour of souls; he was not an apostle of quietism, which is a renunciation of all desires; which is the determined immolation of egotistical will. There was an absolute gulf between the character of Schopenhauer and the part he pretended to play, and in truth this grand contradiction is the only one which gives me a shock.

As Kuno Fischer has justly remarked: "Judging Schopenhauer, it must not be forgotten that in his youth the adoration of genius was the religion of the whole literary world. This worship had its code and its ritual. It was taken for granted that a man of genius was above all common rules that the Philistines were bound to observe. His existence was at the same

time an honor and a fortunate thing for the human kind, which he instructed and delighted by his works. His only duty is to exist and to tell the universe what passes through his imagination. All that is asked of him is to have the sincerity of an artist. Schopenhauer boasted of having received from nature such a gift of imagination and voluntary emotional feelings, as to enable him to bring tears to his eyes by reciting his own writings. He pretended that if he had not preferred to become a great philosopher, he could have made himself easily a great stage-actor. His genius he compared to Mont Blanc, or to the sun. He worshipped only himself. But why did he wish to create another worship for the use of the humble? Why did he fancy at one time that Europe needed a new religion; that his philosophy would supply it, and that he would be the Buddha of the Occident? He tried to persuade his disciples that they were his apostles; he enjoined them to visit one another and wrote them: "At any place where two of you assemble in my name I will be in your midst." Indeed, in the conduct of his life this skilful flute-player was not afraid of discordance and false notes. But did he really take the religious character of his doctrines in good earnest? It is hard for me to believe it. The Germans, when they are at it, are terrible mystifiers. In a military college in Austria, two cadets, who passed their nights in secretly meditating upon the works of the grand Arthur, had reached the conviction that if they were to kill their desire (will) to live, the world would be annihilated. They were perfectly willing to extinguish their will, but had they the right to suppress the world? Vexed by their scruples they addressed the master, and a few weeks before his death he answered them in a style of paternal indulgence that this was one of the transcendental questions which he did not charge himself to solve. That is nearly what Mephistopheles answered to the good young men who submitted to him their cases of conscience.

Examining one of his photographs, it pleased him to say, that he was struck with the astonishing resemblance it bore to the features of Prince Talleyrand, and he wished that others also should be struck with the likeness. He liked to be taken for an impenetrable, mysterious, diabolical being, inspiring all who came near him with a sort of pious fear. Mr. Chalmers Lacour who had gone to Frankfort to see him and dined with him at the hotel, wrote: "His slow-spoken and monotonous words which reached me above the din of glasses and the flashes of gaiety of my neighbors gave me a kind of uneasiness, like that of a cold blast across the open gate of the *néant*." In reading Aristotle, Plato, Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Kant, or Hegel, whatever one may think of their systems, one does not doubt their good faith. They had

all that metaphysical candor, the supreme virtue of great thinkers. When reading "The World as Will and Idea," or his "Parerga," one is less sure, one fears that one is being duped. The edifice appears fair, but while admiring it, we can almost fancy that we hear as from the depth of a cave the secret sneer of the grand magician, who has built it and who laughs at his work and at himself.

Schopenhauer looked upon the bronze statuette of Buddha, cast at Thibet, purchased at Paris, as one of the most precious ornaments of his study. It was placed on a bracket and he held secret conversations with "the perfect being," with the sage of the sages, whose sweet smiles console and redeem the world. He might also have said to the bust: "Thy kindness was equal to thy holiness, thou hast discovered the principle of true morality, but above all thou hast made it thy duty to practise it thyself." Schopenhauer might have taken for his motto the memorable sentence of Goethe, which he wrote in the album of a student: "It is our good God who has given us the nuts, but it is not He who cracks them for us."

The essayist of the *Revue des deux Mondes* is not blind to the contradictions and incoherencies of Schopenhauer. He has frequently dwelt upon them, but he has not pointed out the one which seems to me the greatest of all. Schopenhauer, in his attitude to nearly all philosophical systems, was an iconoclast, and no one was more maligned and denounced by him than his predecessor, J. G. Fichte, though I venture to say that there is the greatest similarity, not to say identity, between his and Fichte's philosophy. What is Schopenhauer's "will" but the strong desire to exist, to live, which extreme striving for existence dwells unconsciously even in the inorganic world, is very strongly implanted in animated and most intensely in human beings. Everything outside the individual man is mere representation (idea). The world is mirrored in his head. Now Fichte's "ego" is the individual, equally bent on his existence. The outside world is a stranger to him, is the "non-ego." He observes only phenomena. Were it not for this most ardent desire to exist, impressed on mankind by the creative power, the world would soon come to an end. Were the desire to exist but feeble or entirely latent, many a man would put an end to his life with a bare bodkin, when afflicted with a violent toothache. According to both, when the individual dies, the world dies. It is true, from the very same premise, Fichte, who loved mankind and strove to live for it, drew different conclusions, as Jean Paul and Madam de Staël also did, but that does not deprive Fichte of the merit, if merit it be, of being the original source of Schopenhauer's system, nor did it justify the abuse which the latter so abundantly has heaped upon him.

CURRENT TOPICS.

PROBABLY the most efficient policeman in preserving peace among nations is International Trade. The new treaty of commerce between Germany and Russia is already interpreted as not merely a commercial agreement, but also as a pledge of political friendship. The intention of the French Government to increase the tariff on wheat threatens to dissolve the Franco-Russian alliance against the Dreibund, if such an alliance was in reality ever formed. The Russian Minister of Finance will regard the new tariff on grain, if adopted by the French Government, as a declaration of commercial war against Russia, and in that case he will apply retaliatory and repressive measures; and while he is about it he will enforce those measures not only against France, but also against "several American imports." "Russia," says the Minister, "is able to get along without imports from France or America." This is doubtless true, and France and America are equally independent of Russia, and every other nation can say the same thing. There is probably not a nation in the world that could not "get along," after a fashion, without external commerce, but it gets along better with it, and this is the benefit that commerce gives to nations. If the Russians need some things that the French have to spare, and the French need some things that the Russians have to spare, it is better for both nations that they exchange with one another. A war of tariffs is better than a war of guns, but peace is better than either.

* * *

The House of Lords has been meddling in politics lately, and thereupon a cry for its reformation or its abolition comes up from the people outside. That the abolition of the House of Lords will be a plank in the coming "platform" of the Liberal party seems very likely now. Mr. Gladstone himself may act as a conservative break on the movement, because a good deal of Tory sentiment remains in him still, but the younger members of his cabinet, with hotter and more tumultuous blood in their veins, want to share in the enthusiasm created by the prospect of a revolution that will end the House of Lords. At the conference of the Liberal Federation held at Portsmouth on the 14th of February, Sir William Vernon Harcourt, Mr. Gladstone's first lieutenant in Parliament, said: "Is it this nation's will to be controlled by the representatives of the people, or by a chamber representing nothing but a selfish class? . . . It is the business of the Liberals to convince the Lords that the people will no longer allow them to override the people's will." In answer to that the Lords can say, "Well, we had a good time of it while we lasted"; and when that gilded relic of antiquity, the House of Lords, is finally converted into a committee-room, or something of that sort, their lordships will probably laugh as heartily as anybody at the barbarian coronets and robes, and stars and garters, and collars and crosses, and all the rest of the tomfoolery by which they have hypnotised the English people for seven or eight hundred years.

* * *

The abolition of the British House of Lords will be a caution to its counterpart and imitation, the American Senate. Although the Senate is more firmly established in our Constitution than is the House of Lords in the Constitution of Great Britain, it will at last come under the same criticism and meet the same fate. Political causes work out the same consequences in all countries just like other laws, and the American Senate is becoming unpopular, partly because of its own actions, but principally because the people are just beginning to find out that it is an aristocracy and an elective House of Lords. It is criticised and even menaced for the same reasons that threaten the existence of its prototype and model. It is rather suggestive that while Sir William Harcourt was denouncing the House of Lords at Portsmouth, the editor of the *News* was writing like this at Indianapolis: "The Senate is the greatest log-rolling body of law-makers in the world. And at

this present time the Senate is engaged in a conspiracy against the people of the United States. It is more important that one of those fossil millionaires should be pleased than that the most righteous law should be passed over his protest. There is no call for any wild talk, but we would remind the Senators that the people are above the Constitution, and that they cannot shield themselves behind that Constitution if the people are ever persuaded that the Senate is a nuisance that must be abated." This is very much like the talk of Sir William Harcourt, but the significance of it lies in the warning that "the people are above the Constitution," an ancient principle that seems to have been forgotten by the politicians of this land.

* * *

The adjective "un-American" has been so grievously overworked in rebuking some very American practices that we feel a genuine pleasure when we find it properly applied. Some of the most prominent citizens of Chicago have organized themselves into a "Civic Federation" for the purpose of improving the government of the city. At a meeting of the Federation to adopt a Constitution and By-Laws, it was proposed that, "Any member of the central council who shall become a candidate for or accept a political office shall forfeit his membership in the Civic Federation." The resolution was opposed by some of the members on the ground that it was putting a boycott on themselves, and that such a boycott was "unmanly and un-American." I fail to see anything "unmanly" in it, but it really does appear to be "un-American." A body of citizens voluntarily renouncing all political ambition and all aspirations for office, is a remarkably "un-American" sacrifice. "What are we here for," said Mr. Flanagan, "except the offices?" which reminds me of Judge Wilson of Marbletown, the day that Sumter was fired on. We had a meeting in the evening at which the Judge declared that the Union must be maintained at any cost, "because if this Government is to be broken up, fellow citizens, what's to become of the offices?" And something like that was the argument of Mr. Seward at the famous Delmonico dinner, when he predicted that the trouble would be all over in ninety days, because as soon as our Southern friends discovered that in dissolving the Union they were losing the offices they would all come back. It is gratifying to record that in spite of all opposition, the Civic Federation stood firmly by its resolution to keep the society free from the contamination of office-hunting politics.

* * *

The Packing Manufacturers and Canning Association, and the Western Cannery Association held their annual convention last week in Chicago, and curiously enough, it was the only convention held here this winter that did not "want a law passed." In fact, as reported by the papers, "the question of the law pending before the Ohio Legislature which proposes to oblige manufacturers of canned goods to label their packages with the date of canning, was brought up and briefly discussed. The members of the Association are unanimously opposed to the measure, and yesterday's discussion resulted in the appointment of a committee to draft a set of resolutions denouncing the law." It is the business of those canners to pack meat, fish, fruit, and vegetables in cans, and sell their wares in the market at the most favorable time, but unfortunately their merchandise does not improve with age, like wine; in fact, after fermenting in the cans for a few years it is likely to become insipid, and perhaps, unwholesome, sometimes indeed, even poisonous, but this is usually attributed to the chemical action of the acids on the tin cans, and it is never the fault of the canners nor due to the antiquity of their goods. The people of Ohio, not being poison-proof, like some of us farther west, want their canned goods fresh instead of stale, and when they buy a can of peas or strawberries they want to know at what time in the century the peas and strawberries grew. Actuated by the same feel-

ing, the Legislature of Ohio proposes to pass a law compelling the canners to stamp upon the cans the exact year when the canning was done. To this the Western canners, and the Eastern canners, and the Northern canners, and the Southern canners, and all the other canners are unanimously opposed, because they want the age of their goods to remain, like the age of a woman, a mystery. The proposed law being merely for the protection of the general public, and not in behalf of a special interest, it will probably never be passed.

* * *

The personality of the Devil has been judicially determined in the affirmative by a judge and jury of the Salvation Army at a trial in which that well-known criminal, Satan, was defendant. The trial was held at the Head Quarters of the Salvation Army in the old skating rink on West Madison Street; and so great was the public interest in the case that the hall was crowded, although a general admission fee of ten cents a head was charged, and twenty-five cents for a reserved seat, the winner taking all the gate money and the loser nothing. As the prosecutors had the appointment of the judge, and the selection of the jury, they had a great advantage, and the objection made by the defendant's counsel to the unfair character of the tribunal was promptly overruled. Notice of appeal was given but it will do no good, because any ecclesiastical court will decide that the rulings in the case, and the law, and the evidence were all strictly orthodox, according to the letter and spirit of the Bible and the precedents running back for nearly six thousand years. One witness testified that in California he had been persuaded by the Devil to commit a burglary, for which he, and not Satan, had suffered three months imprisonment. Grotesque as this appears to be, it was not only good theology but good law; and the witness probably remembered how it was charged in the indictment that, "being moved and instigated by the Devil," he committed the crime. This was the form for hundreds of years in England, and it prevails in some of the American States to this day. Other witnesses gave similar testimony, one saying that the Devil had given him lessons in theosophy, while another swore that Satan had taken him to hear Colonel Ingersoll. They described also the personal appearance of the Devil, his horns, tail, and the fire coming out of his mouth. The high-toned ministers of the Gospel sneer contemptuously at this burlesque performance, but the theology of it is in their own creeds; and the judge who presided at the trial, in justification of his ruling, can say with Uncle Toby, "It is in the Scriptures Trim, and I will show it thee to-morrow."

M. M. TRUMBULL.

NOTES.

The date of publication of this number of *The Open Court*, February 22, is not only Washington's, but also Schopenhauer's birthday. Our readers will therefore peruse with pleasure ex-Governor Koerner's article on the Frankfort philosopher.

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